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HISTORY THE TEACHER OF MANKIND

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Long-established usage has given us the word "history." History is a unitary concept. For practical purposes we may say that history is a story or a tale including in sequence all events that have made man conscious. It is a matter of relations —of relations in succession, of relations in location or geography or space. It is a matter of relations physical, individual, social, and unitary. History is about *man*. It is the *story* of man in his changing relations. The history of history shows that man's changing relations are of three kinds—relations to nature, relations to society, and relations to some fundamental unity which philosophy very early called God. The quest of philosophy still in our own days is for an ultimate unitary concept. Historically and inductively, then, we may suggest that history is the story of man in his threefold group of relations to nature, to society, and to God.

This is, of course, a definition of general history. It appears, then, that usage in unconsciously giving us the word was correct, was in harmony with the facts. The world could not have gotten on simply with conceptions of histories. These certainly have a place; separate, special, minute, local histories, are absolutely necessary; without these special studies history would become vague, ethereal, without content, worthless. But, on the other hand, histories without history would present a spectacle of anarchy, in which they would rend each other, and in their aimless conflict render impossible great and good ideals that a harmonious activity would realize. History and histories, then, stand in the relation of genus and species. History is a hierarchy; or, borrowing a biological metaphor, history is an organism; and, according to Kant, an organism is "a product in which each and every part is reciprocally means and end;" or, again, history is a body having "diversities of gifts, but the same spirit."

But let us glance at the content of our definition. Says Carl Ritter, the great geographer: "This much is certain: history does not stand at the side of nature, but within nature." Man, to be understood, must be studied in close and constant relation to nature. What appear to be some of nature's attributes toward man are:

First, she seems remorseless, she threatens him with annihilation, and seeks to make good her threat. But in so doing she arouses his native capacities. When these latent mental powers are awakened to the idea of self-preservation, man turns upon nature, studies her tactics, discovers her laws, applies them to herself, and makes her his servant.

Second, nature is beneficent—contradictory as it seems. She is bounteous in her supplies of food, in her arrangement of climate, soil, rivers, mountains, and combinations of elements into objects of beauty. In a word, she has made a stage for the human drama; and the more we look at this stage, the more we see that she had her task well in hand. She has omitted nothing from the solid framework to the minutest details of the scenery.

Our great poets have been foremost in detecting and expressing the mighty influences of nature on the development of man. To Gray, Greece was a land "where each old poetic mountain inspiration breathed around." Wordsworth, with poetic license, sings:

Two voices there are; one is of the sea,
One is of the mountains, each a mighty voice:
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice;
They were thy chosen music, Liberty.

Byron, looking north from the olive groves of the Spartan valley in the spring, was inspired to write:

Thy vales of evergreen, thy hills of snow,
Proclaim thee Nature's varied favorite now.

The beneficence of geography is beautifully shown by Euripides, as follows:

Far spreads Laconia's ample bound,
With high-heaped rocks encompassed round,
The invader's threat despising.
But ill its bare and rugged soil
Rewards the ploughman's painful toil;
Scant harvests there are rising.

While o'er Messenia's beauteous land
 Wide-watering streams their arms expand,
 Of nature's gifts profuse;
 Bright plenty crowns her smiling plain;
 The fruitful tree, the full-eared grain,
 Their richest stores produce.
 Large herds her spacious valleys fill,
 On many a soft descending hill
 Her flocks unnumbered stray;
 No fierce extreme her climate knows,
 Nor chilling frost nor wintry snows,
 Nor dog-star's scorching ray.

Our own Whittier tells of an uncle:

Himself to nature's heart so near
 That all her voices in his ear
 Of heart or bird had meanings clear.

Says the Psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all; the earth is full of thy riches."

These specimens remind us of the wealth of beauty and inspiration that nature has stimulated in the minds of men. The great and rapidly growing interest in country life, in animals, in plants, quickened by such writers as John Burroughs, William J. Long, Ernest Thompson Seton, and by such books as Professor Bailey's *Face to Face with Nature*, and Harwood's charming book on Luther Burbank, entitled *New Creations in Plant Life*, is apparent to all. The student of history who seeks all the moving forces of society may not neglect this side of his field.

Numerous definitions of civilization from a naturalistic point of view have been given. One of the best is by Mitchell:

Civilization is nothing more than a complicated outcome of a war waged with nature by man in society to prevent her from putting into execution in his case her law of natural selection.¹

But the story of man is concerned not only with his relations to nature; it is also concerned with his relations to his fellow-men—or society. The field of history is commonly supposed to lie in this second division of our definition, but to include only a very small part of it—that, namely, which pertains to governments, constitu-

¹ *The Past in the Present*, p. 188.

tions, political institutions in general. Indeed, some years ago a very eminent historian said: "History is past politics, and politics is present history." This rather striking utterance was at once caught up. It became the motto of a great historical journal, and many of us marched under this banner for a while. It soon became evident, however, that this form of words was altogether too limited in its scope for a definition of history. The most that could possibly be claimed for it was that it was a definition of a history.

When we first come upon men, we find them living in groups. We need not give any theory of these groups. But the experience of later times seems to warrant the assumption that, while man was essentially a unit, then, as later, individuals differed widely and minutely. These differences were physical and mental. The mental differences were intellectual, emotional, and volitional—the ordinary psychological classification. The physical and mental are usually, perhaps always, blended in human experience. The physical is the basis of phenomenal activity, and at first the physical controlled. But the intellectual soon showed itself in prowess and cunning; the emotional, in love, in religion, in anger; the volitional, in daring and endurance. These variations determine the character of society. If the physical predominates, society is coarse and brutal; if the intellectual, society is cunning, crafty, selfish, heartless; if the emotional, society is æsthetic, moral, religious; if the volitional, society is purposive, venturesome, set on the attainment of ends or ideals. Properly based on the physical, properly regulated by the intellectual, and moderately fired by the emotional, a strong volitional society will realize the highest and most beneficent ideals. But precisely as individuals or groups are weak at any or all these points will they take their places at varying stages from the higher to the lower positions in the social process. Thus it becomes clear how it was that, long before man was conscious of it, organization was a great and universal fact. We may safely assume that very near the beginning these differences existed. But sometimes the gradations almost balanced. When questions arose concerning food, shelter, wives, and what not, it became simply a matter of physical and intellectual strength as to who should be the owner, and the earth was filled with violence. Ideas of right and wrong were not yet sufficiently

in consciousness to have much influence. But through antithesis and conflict men slowly came upon the suggestion that they might compare interests, that they might have some common interests; so reason dawned. Reason has been recently called "efficacious reflection." Reason clearly showed that, instead of killing each other, it was better for all to unite in the mutually helpful efforts to subdue nature and make her produce for the common weal. Reason leads men through thoughtful experience to the conception of co-operation. When the co-operative stage has been reached, a firm basis has been secured for the rapid development of man under a variety of categories.

Of these categories the fundamental one is social. In the first group of men the social category was a fact. Relations were established, and from that day to this the perennial problem has been: How can men live harmoniously and happily together? The other categories have been differentiated from the social category, and their *raison d'être* has been a contribution to the solution of this problem. But the social category is very general. In it man is simply a member of society. We must come closer to the individual. We must fix man as a member of some definite society. This society must be organized in some particular way, and so in floating down the stream of history we come upon the state. As man has progressed from society in general to society in particular, he has advanced from an individual with ill-defined limitations to an individual with sharply defined limitations, or to citizenship.

From the beginning of his social relations there grew up understandings as to what might or might not be done, and as to the ways in which things should be done, as customs. These customs varied with race, geographical location, social environments. But, in order that man in his closer relationships might get the best out of them, it was necessary that these customs should be elaborate, more sharply defined, formulated into laws. Law in its ideal perfection, we are told, must be uniform for all members of the state, void of ambiguity, open to searching criticism. We are thus led to the legal category. Its realization is very difficult, but states become perfectly organized in the same ratio that they become perfectly legalized.

But specifically what is the function of law? On the basis of

experience, the function of law is to point out the spheres of action within which individuals may act freely and productively, without coming into conflict with the spheres of action of other individuals who have the same rights of free activity.

We can barely enumerate some of the other categories of history, each one of which has its specific part in establishing the unity of history. There is the ethical category. Says Kant in his *Metaphysics of Ethics*:

Duty! wondrous thought that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence thy original?²

The æsthetic category soon appears and has a good account to give of itself; likewise the commercial category, with its ultimate ends of bringing peace—because the more men understand commerce, the more they see that they cannot afford to go to war—and of supplying the products of all civilization to every deserving individual. And finally we may mention the educational category. As soon as men gained experience and learned its value, they put it into some kind of form. This formulated experience was taken up, enlarged, differentiated, better understood as contributing to the stability of society. As a matter of self-preservation, society began to teach this experience to the young, and education became a positive, all-pervading, fundamental discipline. Politics, law, ethics, religion, each one had its deposit of experience which it taught. The teacher came into being, and he and his pupils combined into schools, and educational system arose. Education, as we readily see, is fundamental in all social relations.

And so as we examine these and other modes of manifestation, it turns out that they are all contained germinally in the social manifold; that they develop in response to the exigencies of experience; that they are in vital relations to each other, and that the immediate end of them all is found in their origin. By whom all things, for whom all things.

But society as its own end has never been able to satisfy the deepest needs of man. The field of consciousness has yet to be enlarged.

² V. Semple's translation, p. 186.

Physical nature affords no resting-place, and man's mental and social nature in their widest conceivable combinations do not even come nearer to furnishing a resting-place. Rather, strangely enough, this enlarged sphere of consciousness only furnishes the elements that make men more wretched and their lives more unbearable, as witness the rapid growth of pessimism in the midst of the outward splendor of twentieth-century civilization. Cases are abundant. Take one familiar and recent: In the famous *Autobiography* Herbert Spencer admits that the "higher pleasures of life all tend to disappear in proportion as we become conscious of their scientific analysis. As his life drew to a close, he felt a kindness toward those religions whose object is a personal deity. Of all saddening reflections which the approach of death suggested to him, the most saddening was the reflection that there might at the back of the universe be no consciousness at all, but merely a species of groping, protoplasmic mind, which breaks into transitory consciousness in feeble units like ourselves."³

This yearning that arises from the deeps of our nature found its best expression and its completest satisfaction in Hebrew history, where we have the revelation of one God, the Father of his people. The establishment and the unity of the kingdom of God came through the self-sacrificing love of Christ. Through him the conception of God was universalized. Of him the old Scriptures testified, and his love embraced the gentiles, for he said: "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold. Them also must I bring and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

Surely the story of this marvelous answer to the necessities of men falls within the field of general history; for general history is concerned with the development of the whole life of man, and it can be content with nothing short of grasping that life in all its manifold relations. "Strive to *be whole*," says Schiller, "and if thou lackest the power, be part of a *whole* and serve it with faithful heart."

Is history, then, adapted to be the teacher of mankind? Mankind, is surely, as our subject implies, looking for a teacher. We may, then, regard this paper as a teacher's examination—history the candidate, we both pupils and examiners. It is certainly proper to inquire very carefully into the candidate's native capacity and equip-

³ Mallock, *The Reconstruction of Religious Belief*, p. 129.

ment. Like all examinations, this one is necessarily sketchy, but from the tests made here and there we can form some estimate of the candidate's eligibility.

What are some of the marks that we expect in a teacher?

1. He must be universal. He must be practical to the extent of caring for the smallest interest of the humblest man, and theoretical to the extent of dropping his plummet into the profoundest depths of being. He must arise far above the sneer that reveals the small nature when it is thrown at either the practical or the theoretical side of life. In other words, special work is emphasis laid on a phase of the whole work. The whole is focused in the part, and the part radiates the whole. The story of man seems to meet this fundamental requirement; for surely it considers nothing foreign to itself.

2. The teacher must be rich in learning. This learning must be wide, profound, and well classified. The story of man could not be of man unless it embraced all the interests, inspirations, aspirations, and achievements of man in thrilling unity. It is often objected that the knowledge contained in history is chaotic, and that it defies ultimate classification. But, as things go, in its long stretches history is found to be fairly regular, and to be only relatively less so than even the so-called exact sciences. The history of science is a perpetual warning on this point.

3. The teacher must make his learning so "attractive and compelling in interest" that his students will eagerly respond to the stimulus, draw and appropriate the lesson. So far is history from being uninteresting that, when manifested by a master, it has all the attractions of literature. It refuses to submit to the unnatural limitations that some self-appointed dictators would impose upon it.

4. The ideal teacher, without being dogmatic, without even a word, in the blazing light of his subject, by his example, by his insistence upon a full estimation of all the facts, will keep steadily before his pupils the highest and truest social, ethical, and religious ideals. At this point history is eminently qualified for the teachership, because nowhere else are deeds and consequences found in such constant juxtaposition.

But what are some of the many lessons that history teaches?

To attempt to state all the lessons which this great Teacher of Mankind has taught and is teaching would be to summarize the wisdom of the world. But we may venture to state a few of the great truths which history is constantly inculcating.

1. That sin will be punished, while virtue will have its reward. Of course, it is at present fashionable to taboo rewards and punishments as motives—and we readily admit that they are not the highest motives. But that they, in ways that we cannot here indicate, have and will have a powerful and legitimate influence cannot, in the light of history and psychology, be doubted. A few years ago the writer called upon our countryman, W. J. Stillman, in Rome. He was writing the last pages of his *History of Modern Italy*. The old historian had for a long time kept in mind the cause of Italian history. He had seen the sins of the papacy, of the princes, and of the nobility. With emphasis he said: "I tell you, sir, sin will always be punished. This is the abiding lesson of history." And what an abundance of examples we find, not only in the past, but all about us! Let us take a single familiar example. France was the first of the modern European peoples to be unified into a monarchy. But she ignored the true interests of her common people for centuries. She suppressed them, tyrannized over them, degraded them, starved them. She encouraged no gradual instruction and practical training of her masses in self-government and religion. When the Reformation came, she passed through bloody convulsions, but fell short of reformation. Kings, nobles, and priests sinned egregiously. When at last retribution came, it was a devastating torrent; and for a time it seemed as if the foundations of French society were swept away.

In contemporary England we have a radically different development. The interests of the people were never entirely lost. More and more the people came to the front. At the close of the thirteenth century a house of commons, representative of the people, was established. Government is, of course, complicated, and there is always more or less of feverish unrest. But, upon the whole, the classes are learning how to live together in harmony. When a law was made, king, lord, and commoner had to obey it. Thus, by constant practical exercise in citizenship and strict justice to all parties, obstacles were gradually overcome, friction was lessened—and Eng-

land has had no real revolutions, no social convulsions that she could not manage—and here the world first realizes true justice and true liberty.

Russia failed to learn the plain lessons of French and English history, fell into the errors and sins of the French, and is now taking her punishment.

Out of the wealth of examples past and present we may mention but one more. The sins even of historians will be punished. From the times of Herodotus and Ctesias to the present, the records are crowded with examples. We all know the disrepute into which Froude has fallen among historians who pride themselves on their accuracy. Freeman more than anybody else is responsible. But now a doughty champion of Froude has arisen in no less a historian than Herbert Paul. He attempts to show that Freeman himself did not know the field that he claimed to cultivate; that he wrote his *Norman Conquest* from books, and not from manuscripts; that, under the influence of an ecclesiastical prejudice, “he carried on an organized and systematic campaign of vilification and abuse against the man who used more original material in the compilation of his work than had any historian before him, and, we might say, any historian since his day.” This attempted rehabilitation of Froude will probably attract wide attention, and it may be that the historian whose influence has been so great will have to be punished for his sins.⁴

2. Historical processes are slow. Nations and individuals do not degenerate in a day or a year. When startling revelations are made, and falsehood and crime abound, analysis usually shows that the beginnings were small and the growth almost imperceptible. It is hard to believe that the men in the present insurance scandals who now stand out as great criminals became so suddenly. Indeed, one of them died with the conviction that he had done nothing wrong. Another thinks the insurance proposition so big that “in defending its rights and property you cannot stop to kick every cur that comes along and barks.” Such is the terrible retribution of insidious crime.

On the other hand, deeply entrenched sins in a nation’s vitals are slow of removal. Sometimes we are called upon to suffer injus-

⁴ Paul’s *Life of Froude*.

tice to the end of our days. But loyalty, obligation to coming generations, demand that we make the most of what we can control, and not spoil what has already been gained by seeking the immediate realization of ideals far in the future. It would be a great day if all of us could appreciate the indubitable fact that in making the world better we all count.

3. History teaches that nations and individuals alike bear prosperity with extreme difficulty. It is a commonplace that there are two great menaces in our life. The first is the menace from the outside, the struggle for physical existence against nature and our fellow-men. The second is the menace from the inside, from ourselves. This is far the more dangerous. When physical existence is amply secured, and our mental needs are abundantly supplied, we grow haughty, insolent, overbearing, unjust, luxurious, weak; and before we are aware of it we stand face to face with annihilation. Will the great republic in the far western world, that has imagined itself the "special care of the Ruler of the universe," be able to keep its intellect clear, its morals pure, and its will strong? We find it nowhere written in the stars that history will make an exception even in the case of her youngest child.

4. We have already transcended the limits set for this article. Out of the many remaining lessons from history we may barely mention one more: There is a goal in human affairs. To the student of general history, to him who sees history whole, taking full account of all that the pessimist and the cynic have to say, progress from the worst to the better, and from the better toward the best, illy defined though it may be, seems an irresistible inference. And our inference is sustained by an abiding faith that

"These struggling tides of life
That seem in aimless wayward waves to tend
Are but eddies in the mighty stream
That rolls to its appointed end."

We have now subjected history to a desultory examination. We have tested her as to the extent, variety, and attractiveness of her knowledge; as to her nature, pedagogical qualifications, and message. We pronounce her in a very high degree eligible to the teachership.